



Success Strategies for Tracing Welsh Families

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Challenges

- Common names
- Late start date of parish birth, marriage and death/burial registers
- Nonconformity
- Low survival of chapel birth, marriage and death/burial registers
- Patronymics
- More research time is needed
- Welsh language

Key Records Online

The typical order for searching records must change, partly due to the common names. This list is arranged with greater value placed on records that are easy to get to and which show a person within as broad a context as possible. The order in which you search records will vary depending on the time period you are working in and the research question.

1. **Census:** This is important for the ability to see a person within the context of their family, community and occupation. Census substitutes may be included for all time periods.
2. **Monumental Inscriptions:** These also show a person with additional information that gives a clearer view of which John Jones he is. Many, but not all have been recorded by Welsh family history societies.
3. **Church and chapel records:** These include more than just christening, marriage and burial records although few of the additional records are online. Most of the parish register indexes are available on FamilySearch. Indexes and images are on Findmypast.
4. **Civil registration:** These may cover most of the population after 1837 but are not open for public use. Good indexes exist. Alternatives exist for obtaining marriage certificates by using parish register marriages.

Indexes at <https://www.freebmd.org.uk/>

Some indexes, certificate orders at

<https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates/Login.asp>

5. **Probate:** About 10% of the people left a will but about 40% are mentioned in those wills. Families are often identified. These records are available for free on the National Library of Wales website. Probate abstracts are available on FamilySearch with all name indexes.

Findmypast Key Record Sets:

- Wales parish registers (unique to Findmypast)
- Census 1841-1911
- Passenger lists of people leaving the UK 1890-1960
- Index to Death Duty Registers 1796-1903
- Non-conformist births, baptisms, burials and marriages before 1837 (TNA RG4-RG8)
- National Burial Index (unique to Findmypast)
- 1939 National Registration (available in FHL & FHCs) (unique to Findmypast)
- Periodical Source Index (PERSI)

Findmypast has published most of the parish registers for Wales in association with the Welsh County Archivists Group and the National Library of Wales.

	Years Covered	Records
Baptisms	1538-1912	2,083,430
Marriages	1539-1927	1,226,650
Banns	1603-1927	557,078
Burials	1539-2007	2,057,453

Searches can be done two ways, global (search from the home page) or within each record set. Each has benefits and your choice will depend on the problem you are solving. In most cases I prefer to search within one record set. This can be done by pointing at "Search records" then click on "A-Z of record sets".

Many family history societies have made their indexes available on Findmypast. Search these when you are not able to find what you think should be in the parish registers.

Try a similar search on FamilySearch or Findmypast since the same records are included there but the search operates differently. Many of the Bishop's Transcript indexes are on FamilySearch, Ancestry and Findmypast.

Parishes not included in the online Findmypast and FamilySearch parish register collections can be found listed at:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Wales_Parish_Registers_Not_Published_on_Findmypast_%26_FamilySearch

FamilySearch <https://familysearch.org/>

FamilySearch offers several options for free access to information. If used from home, there are some features such as images of the Wales parish registers that will not be available although the index is included for free.

Key online record sets: (there are 33 total)

- Wales parish register indexes
- Census 1841-1911
- Wales Probate Abstracts 1544-1858 (all name indexes in a browse image collection)
- England and Wales Non-Conformist Record Indexes (RG4-RG8), 1588-1977
- Wales Births and Baptisms, 1541-1907 (should include Bishop's Transcripts)
- Wales, Court and Miscellaneous Records, 1542-1911

Simple Welsh Research Strategy

1. Search records with multiple people like census, probate and monumental inscriptions
2. Use marriages as a finding tool. This usually gives extra points to search.
3. Add more information with other records
4. Kill them off by finding death and burial information

Tactics for Success

- Find your ancestor in every census during their lifetime
- Always search both the parish registers and Bishop's Transcripts
- Kill off your ancestor
- Always use indexes
- Never trust an index
- Watch for patronymics: David Thomas Howell indicates that a fixed surname was not settled yet
- Search by given name
- Find old local histories

Record Search Order

1. Census
2. Monumental inscriptions
3. Church & chapel records
4. Civil registration
5. Probate records

Additional Resources

Family History Library Catalog <https://familysearch.org/catalog-search>

Lists records that are available in the Family History Library and more than 4,500 centers around the world. Records may be listed at the parish, county, country and kingdom level. The keyword search will show additional items you may otherwise miss. It can be searched by place, surname, keyword, film or fiche number, subject, author and title. It is now tied to the OCLC WorldCat website helping you find sources in a library close to where you live.

FamilySearch Books

https://books.familysearch.org/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=FHD_PUBLIC

This is a collection of more than 150,000 digitized books.

FamilySearch Wiki https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Wales_Genealogy

Help information for Welsh family history records, where to find them and how to use them.

FamilySearch Genealogies <https://familysearch.org/family-trees>

Genealogies are trees submitted to FamilySearch. Accuracy varies. A Welsh database contains about 305,000 individuals, mostly born before 1700.

Wales Genealogy Research group on FamilySearch Community

<https://community.familysearch.org/s/group/0F93A000000LgVcSAK/wales-genealogy-research>